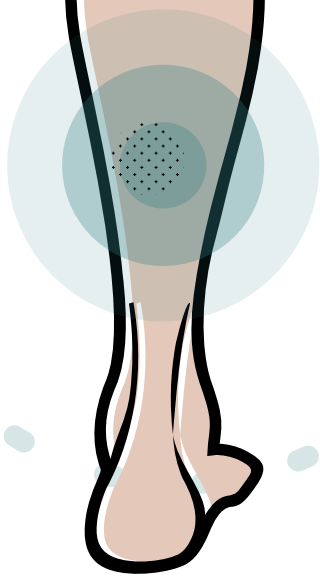


Patient/Resident Reference Guide

Venous Leg Ulcers: Care for Patients in All Settings





Quality standards outline what high-quality care looks like.

They focus on conditions where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive.

This guide addresses variations and gaps in care in Ontario that need attention when it comes to managing venous leg ulcers. It is based on the best available evidence and was created in partnership with patients, their families, and health care professionals.

Venous leg ulcers are long-lasting sores that occur when the veins in the legs do not pump blood back to the heart properly. This can result in damage to the surrounding skin and the tissue underneath the skin.

This guide is for people living with venous leg ulcers, their families, and other caregivers to help you know what to ask for when receiving treatment and to make sure you receive the highest-quality care.

If you or someone you care about has a venous leg ulcer or is at risk of developing one...

You can use this guide to help you and your health care professionals develop a care plan that works for you. You should use this information to become aware of what high-quality care looks like and to ask informed questions about your care.

Care plans can be very different for each person, so it is important to work closely with your health care professionals.

Here are some things to consider.

Understanding and Planning Your Care

Assessment

- If your health care professional thinks you might have a leg ulcer, you should have a test for peripheral arterial disease at least once a year. The results will determine what type of treatment you should have, such as compression therapy.
- If you have a leg ulcer or are at risk for developing one, you and your family or caregiver should be taught about leg ulcers and who to contact for help.

Treatment

- You should receive care from a team of health care professionals who have been trained to care for people who have a venous leg ulcer or are at risk for one.
- If you have a leg ulcer, you should have a full assessment. Your health care team will want to learn more about your health history, concerns, and preferences. They should also examine

your legs and feet, including any wounds you have. They will use this information to develop a care plan with you.

- Your health care professional should work with you to develop a care plan that reflects your needs, concerns, and preferences. A care plan is a written document that you have agreed on with your health care professional. It describes your goals for your care, the care you will receive, and who will provide it.
- As part of your care plan, you should be offered compression therapy, which can include special bandages or stockings that support your veins and increase the circulation in your legs. You should talk to your health care professional about the most appropriate form of therapy for you.
- To help your wound heal, you should have dead skin, callus, and debris removed (this is called debridement) if your health care professional determines that it is necessary and appropriate.
- If your wound is infected, you should receive treatment, which may include antibiotics.
- If you have a suspected deep/surrounding tissue or systemic infection, you should have an urgent assessment within 24 hours and treatment with antibiotics.
- Your health care team will determine whether your wound can heal or not. You should have a dressing that keeps the wound moist if it can heal, or dry if it cannot heal.
- If you have a leg ulcer that is large or taking a long time to heal, you should be offered a



medication called pentoxifylline, which can help heal your leg ulcer. You should talk to your health care professional to see if this medication is right for you. You should continue compression therapy while you take this medication.

- If your leg ulcer is unusual or not healing, you should be referred to a specialist for further assessment and appropriate treatment.
- When you change health care settings (for example, you return home after being cared for in a hospital), your health care team or health care professional should work with you to make sure that important information is transferred with you, and that you are connected to the supports you need.

Everybody is different, and some statements may not apply in your situation. If you have questions about your care, **it is important to speak with your health care professional.**

Looking for more information?

Please contact us at qualitystandards@hqontario.ca or **1-866-623-6868** if you have any questions or feedback about this patient reference guide.

A more detailed version of this quality standard, written for health care professionals, is available on our website. You can find it at hqontario.ca.

About Health Quality Ontario

Health Quality Ontario is the provincial advisor on the quality of health care. We are motivated by a single-minded purpose: **Better health for all Ontarians.**

Our quality standards are concise sets of statements outlining what quality care looks like. They focus on conditions where there are large variations in how care is delivered, or where there are gaps between the care provided in Ontario and the care patients should receive. They are based on the best available evidence and are developed in collaboration with clinical experts from across the province and patients and caregivers with lived experience with the condition being discussed.

For more information about Health Quality Ontario and our quality standards, visit: hqontario.ca.